FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

Volume 29 / Number 4 / August 1978

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER
TO ONE OF OUR PRAYER ASSOCIATES

Dear Marion:

When I telephoned you about the slight mix-up on your "subscription," our subsequent conversation interested me profoundly because your questions coincided with my own recent musings.

You mentioned the past, saying that throughout the years belonging to the Fellowship was like being part of a "family." You hoped this feeling would never be lost.

I am sure that everyone---all of us---who is involved with the Fellowship feels the same way.

The past year or so has been a period of change and so this might be a good time to rethink the Fellowship's objectives. As a member of the "family," I hope for your personal reaction to them.

Looking over our shoulder for a moment, what FIP's founder, Carl Evans, dreamed of was that thousands of people everywhere---those who are *not* members of a religious institution as well as those who are---would pray for peace, mercy, and justice in the world. Each would pray according to his or her own traditions and faith. This was no attempt to begin a new religion, but rather to encourage each of us to deepen our own awareness of God's presence in the world and then to reflect this presence in our daily lives.

What are we, then? What are you and I members of?

We are Prayer Associates. We belong to what we might describe loosely as a world-wide prayer group comprised of many faiths. This is the essence of FIP. We are in our own way unique, for as far as I know there are no other prayer groups quite like ours. There are ecumenical prayer groups within the Christian structure, but none that I have heard of embracing all major religious faiths.

The exciting possibility is that an association of this kind ultimately can make a difference in contemporary life. What wonders might

be accomplished if thousands around the world were linked together through FIP, praying more or less in unison! Through daily prayer we ourselves are renewed spiritually. And in our renewal we cannot help but become a constructive influence.

Each day we must try to study God's word as it is expressed in our own religious traditions and to pray so that we become so saturated with God's love that when the viccistudes of life put us through a "wringer" his healing love will pour out of us. And we are better able, therefore, to handle the difficult situations in our lives.

Tagore's comment about this is pertinent to our objectives. "Our true life lies at a great depth within us. Our restlessness and weaknesses are in reality merely the stirrings of the surface. That is why we must daily retire in silence far into the quiet depths of our spirit and experience the real joy within us. If we do this, our words and actions will come to be real also."

What are the actions we anticipate through FIP?

1. Our basic plan is to reactivate Carl Evans's original program of placing paid insertions in newspapers in which we discuss different aspects of prayer. These will be placed in publications in the United States to begin with and then in different countries. In this way we will be reaching many people at once---not only those who are already religiously committed, but also those who are searching and for one reason or another are not active members of a particular faith.

2. At an appropriate time we will initiate interfaith seminars here and abroad. The purpose will be to bring together leading thinkers of every major faith to share insights on prayer and the relationship of prayer to the serious problems confronting humanity.

3. We would like to be helpful in setting up regional prayer groups.

IF you would like us to pray for you and for others,
you and they will be included in
our daily intercession prayers.

4. We intend to have essay-contests among highschool-age youngsters writing in the area of values.

5. At some point FIP hopes to establish one or more retreat houses where in a quiet environment "conducive to meditative and devotional disciplines" people may stay for varying lengths of time studying religion, to reassess the priorities in their lives, to meditate, to pray.

6. Eventually it may be possible to give out scholarships in the name of Carl Evans.

7. We look forward to working with groups such as the Center for Religious Studies located at Harvard University in comparative research of prayer.

8. FIP is in touch also with prayer groups and other organizations with similar interests. Those of us in the office offer prayers daily for individuals requesting them.

But in all of this present and contemplated activity, Marion, we can still remain a "family" of a special kind, praying for one another's strength and healing, praying for the world. Together we are a reservoir of prayer power that as yet has not been truly utilized.

I believe we are heading in the right direction, though we are moving cautiously. It is far better to proceed prayerfully and carefully. The basis of our work is prayer. And in our praying we must not fall into the trap of telling God what to do, but rather to listen in quiet to his directions. If we do this, we shall not lose our way. May God help us to remain aware.

I would appreciate your thoughts.

Peace,

Peter Funk

PRAYER

BY LOUIS EVELY

WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO PRAY any more. Prayer is a lost art, with very few teachers or schools left. Do you know of any churches where, on Sunday, we learn how to pray, where we actually do pray, and are lifted up on a wave of prayer? They're few and far between.

We pray so little, so rarely and so poorly. Though we feel bad about it, we don't see what we could possibly do. First of all, we're very busy people; our life is so crammed with activities, distractions, and sometimes even good works, that there's always too much going on and we don't have a minute for anything else. As a result, we're swayed by our weakness, cowardice, and whims. Since we always have a thousand enterprises to choose from, we always find pretexts --- good ones, pious and charitable ones --- to avoid what we don't feel like doing, what we dread doing: that is, stopping, concentrating, and praying. We'd rather do anything but occupy ourselves with God. This solemn confrontation alarms us, for we're afraid to be bored, to learn what we don't care to know, and to be talked into sacrificing what we don't wish to surrender.

Above all, we don't have time for God. Deep down, we're convinced we'd be wasting it on him; and, goodness knows, we can't afford that, with so many matters craving our attention. If God is almighty, our negotiations with him ought to move faster, we should be able to reach a quick understanding and be through. His slowness in revealing himself, acting, and explaining his ways annoys us. For everything

This article, from Louis Evely's TEACH US HOW TO PRAY, translated by Edmond Bonin, is reprinted by permission of The Paulist Press.

"God may be invisible to our eyes, but
he becomes visible to the soul that prays"

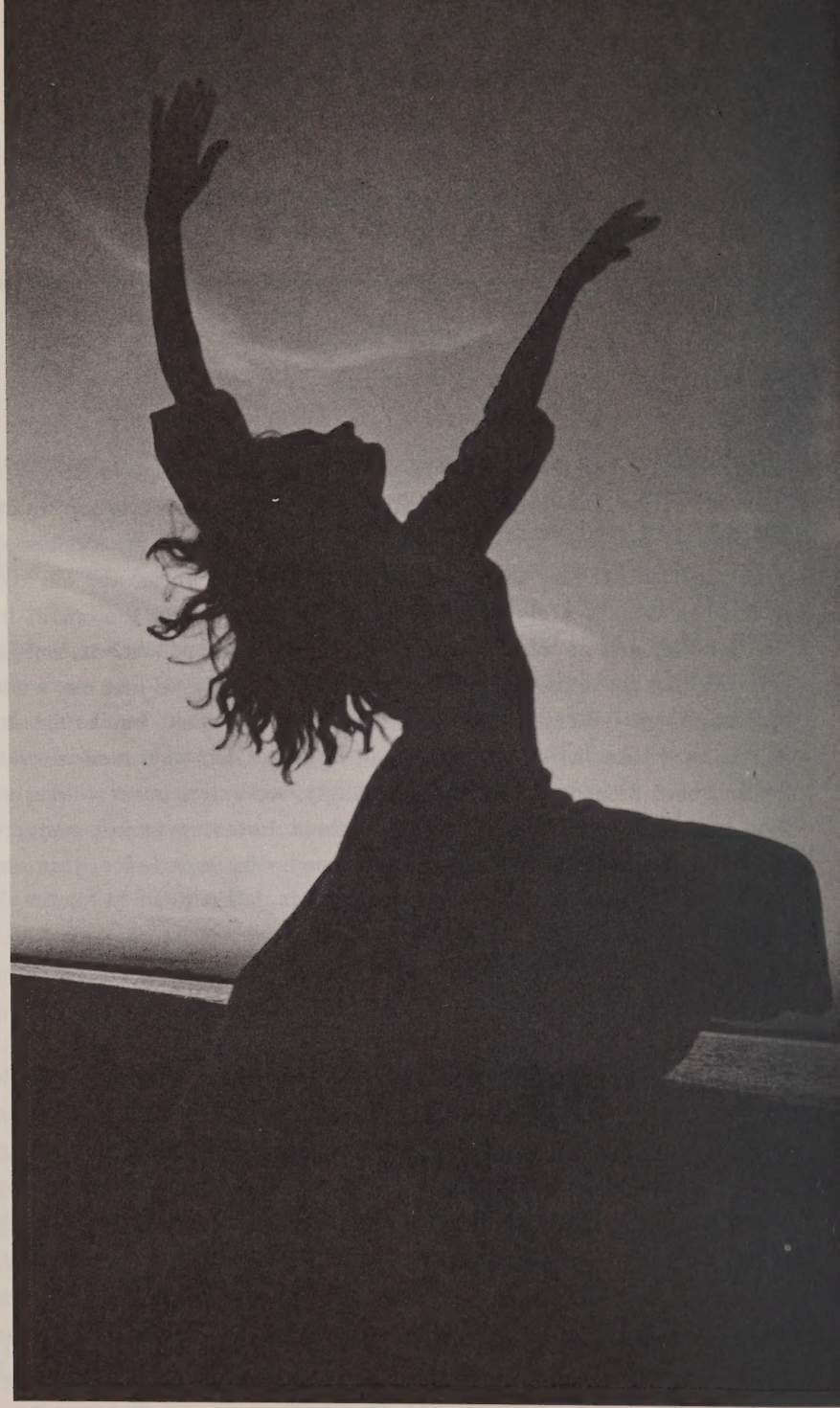
---

else, however, we have plenty of leisure. Visits, get-togethers, movies, football games, concerts, an evening with friends, an invitation we can't decline --- too bad, but we simply have to fit all this in, for it's only right and natural that these people make demands on us and our time. But when God lays claim to our time, we balk; that's too much, it's intolerable, and no modern man or woman can put up with it. Imagine his begging for some of our precious time! We'll give him our works, our name, our voice, and even our money if we must, but he'd better not ask for time. After all, when dealing with God, why need we rattle on and beat around the bush? Accordingly, we enter, summon him, and lay our cards on the table. Then, without listening to his reply, we leave. What shocking neglect shows through this impatience, this arrogant haste! "But I'm in a rush," ' 'I'm pressed for time!' '

ACTUALLY, it's a vicious circle; we're so weak (precisely because we don't pray) that we approach all our problems from a tangent, forever procrastinating in the hope that the longer we wait, the stronger we'll be to tackle them. So we dawdle for weeks and months without writing that certain letter or taking that necessary step or making that vital decision. The less we work, the more we're burdened by the tasks we've left undone and the many obligations we can't meet. Then, when someone comes along and suggests we should pray over and above that,

(Continued on page 34)

Beverly Hall



At sunset on the beach at Nantucket, Carla De Sola dances Psalm 51

Dance As Prayer

BY JOY BERGMAN

CARLA DE SOLA started dancing liturgically ten years ago in the Catholic chapel at New York University. After that, she and friends went on to dance in the streets in front of schools and churches. Someone played a trumpet, someone else read from the Gospels, and at the end bread and honey was handed out to the audience. It was such a success that, the following winter, she and a friend went on a walk through Ohio and Indiana. They decided they would do it in absolute poverty, living off whatever they were given. Carla was a bit frightened at first. She wanted to save a sandwich she had. She didn't. She made herself think of the Gospels, which helped, and as things turned out there was not a single day when they were not given the utmost hospitality. It was a good schooling in the fact that God was taking care of her, she says.

On coming back to New York, Carla and the others founded the Omega Liturgical Dance Company. It is a group effort. Carla, who is a graduate of the Dance department at Julliard School of Music, merely serves as director. It is now in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Carla supports herself by teaching and conducting workshops in prayer and dance. She writes a dance-col-

Paul Basker

Dancing the Magnificat in the Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York

umn for *Liturgy* magazine and has published two books: *Learning To Dance* (published by ThePaulist Press) and *The Spirit Moves --- A Handbook of Dance and Prayer* (published by The Liturgical Conference).

Whether dancing or teaching, Carla prays that her heart may be open to God. She says her classes are "hungry for prayer in dance." She says she can feel the difference when someone comes in who is not interested. When everyone is interested, though, "the presence of God is augmented. Because we are all of one mind, all of one movement, when there is a center."

Bryan Eaton

Mohammed Is His Prophet

BY EDWARD J. JURJI

THE HOUR was sundown. I stood on a hotel balcony in Rabat, Morocco. But it could have been Cairo or Karachi, Djakarta or Istanbul, any of a hundred cities about the globe where the spires of Islam rise. The muzzein's call to prayer floated through the evening hush. Its summons --- rolling, alliterative syllables chanted in Arabic, the tongue of the Prophet Mohammed and of Islam's holy book the Koran --- is one and the same everywhere, just as Allah, God, is one. When that summons swells from minaret to minaret, the faithful stop whatever they are doing, face Mecca, and spread their prayer mats --- worshipers united in reverent act and language.

The communicative magic of the tongue was underscored for me that evening. Prayer time was over, the pious had risen from the last prostration. As the city resumed its business, the devotional mood vanished --- or so it seemed. The hotel doorman and the driver of a taxi he had hailed for me got into a violent argument. With a string of oaths, the driver started the cab. Apprehensive of his driving in such a rage, I tried to calm him, first with English, then French. Neither language had any effect, though I'm sure he understood me. Finally I drew a phrase or two from the Arabic of my Syrian-Lebanese childhood.

With a bounce that shook the vehicle, the driver whooped "*Allahu Akbar!* --- God is most great!" His anger dissolved in enthusiasm at meeting in the unlikely guise of an American traveler a potential Companion of the Garden --- comrade in paradise. A keynote of Islamic parlance, "Allahu Akbar" has many shades of meaning: in war a rallying cry, in peace a prayer, at any time a sign of fraternal goodwill. As a lifelong student of Islam, I felt --- here in al-Maghreb al-Aqsa, the "far west" of Arab chroniclers --- the magnetic pull of that storied faith and ethos.

I would note it even more tangibly in mosque-studded Fez, Moroc-

co's time-washed cultural capital. There the faith shows on the faces of men in white jellabas who stream into mosques for Friday noon prayers: almost every brow bears a pale round spot, an indelible souvenir of the countless times that forehead has pressed the ground as a sign of humble obedience to God.

"Islam" means surrender or submission to the will of Allah, in whose eyes all men are equal, in whose service all men are brothers. Newest of the world's major religions and with claim as the fastest-growing, it centers on the simplest, most straightforward of creeds. Murmured in the ear of the newborn child and ideally the last whisper of the dying, that creed rings in a single sentence: There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet.

This latter clause emphasizes Islam's division from other monotheistic faiths. Followers of Islam, or Moslems (the word in Arabic means "one who submits"), revere Mohammed as the greatest prophet who ever lived, the last of the messengers sent by God. But Moslems honor him and the prophets who preceded him --- notably Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus--- as human, not divine. Allah rules alone. Mohammed's role was to bring to a perverse and materialistic society, through the express mandate of God, an absolute and final revelation: the Koran. The faith thus expounded molded a manifold human community. It galvanized man to action in the worship of God —- and in turn shaped the farflung empire conquered by the word as much as by the sword.

At the time of Mohammed's birth the Arabian desert was a realm of wandering tribes and caravan centers dominated by patrician traders. Men valued manliness and eloquence, demanded fierce loyalty to the clan. They worshiped nature spirits, made pilgimages to a cube-shaped shrine in Mecca housing scores of gods. In that prosperous crossroads city Mohammed was born about A.D. 570 .

Left an orphan, he was reared first by a grandfather, then an uncle. At twelve, Moslem writers say, he went with his uncle on a caravan journey to Syria. Not a few Christian hermits then lived on the borders of the Syrian desert: one whom the boy met predicted he would become a prophet. Young Mohammed, quiet and withdrawn, may have shown signs of the deep thought and insights that characterized his adult years. We don't know. Legends of the Prophet eventually fill-

ed hundreds of volumes but give few facts on his childhood.

We do know that the massive-shouldered, dark-eyed youth worked hard as a shepherd and camel driver, winning the nickname of *al-Amin*, "the trustworthy." A marked change in his fortune came when, at twenty-five, he received this message: "O son of my uncle, I like you because we are relations, and also for your good reputation among people, your...good character and truthfulness." The note, concluding with a proposal of marriage, came from Khadijah, a rich widow for whom he had managed trading caravans. He accepted her offer, though she was fifteen years older than he. The marriage brought him domestic contentment, four daughters, and the leisure to meditate on the destiny of man.

A favorite spot for his reflections was a cave on Mount Hira, three miles from Mecca. Here in the month of Ramadan in the year 610 occurred the fateful "Night of Power" --- when he saw the vision and heard the voice that were to alter his life and through him divert the course of history. Tradition identifies God's agent as the angel Gabriel. "Mohammed, recite," the voice commanded:

Recite: In the name of thy Lord who createth,
Createth man from a clot.
Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
Who teacheth by the pen,
Teacheth man that which he knew not.

Thus was revealed the first fragment of the Koran, held to be God's eternal and infallible word. Convinced of his mission to proclaim the message anew --- man had corrupted the pure monotheism revealed by Abraham and other prophets --- Mohammed memorized the words: later they were set down by a scribe. Similarly over a twenty-two-year period came each of the Koran's 78,000 words.

Long before the night of the first revelation, monotheistic trends were astir in and about Arabia. Though many desert people venerated the moon and stars --- and at the Kaaba, Mecca's ancient shrine, bowed to many idols --- they also recognized a chief god called Allah, or "the God." In Mohammed's time, Biblical ideas were spreading from Jewish and Christian outposts. Too, Arabs and Jews had in Abraham a common

ancestor --- the Arabs being descended through Ishmael, son of Hagar. In the Koran, Abraham exposes the error of moon worship, but both the crescent moon and the star emblem of the ancient Semites survive as a symbol of Islam; it appears on flags of half a dozen nations.

Against a background of these religious traditions, fired by his own vision and Khadijah's steadfast support, Mohammed eagerly awaited further visitations. He went often to Hira. He meditated. He waited. He hoped. And when more than two years had passed without new revelations, he despaired. A ninth-century biographer records that "he seriously considered...hurling himself down to the abyss from either Mount Hira or Mount Thabir. Just as he was about...to jump off...he heard a heavenly voice...and beheld Gabriel, seated upon a throne set between heaven and earth, who said: 'Mohammed! Thou art the Messenger of God and I am Gabriel.' From that moment onward, the Prophet never again faltered...Revelations therafter steadily increased."

Mohammed was unschooled, but he could preach with eloquence and passion. His first sermons reviled idolatry and all its supporters --- including his own tribe, the Quraysh. Its aristocracy turned a handsome profit providing for the needs of pilgrims who came from all over Arabia to worship at the Kaaba. God's wrath would surely overtake men who refused to yield to his undivided sovereignty, Mohammed preached. He proclaimed not a new god but the all-powerful God of creation and judgment, revealing himself to man once more: "Therefore invoke not with Allah another god, lest thou be one of the doomed. And warn thy tribe of near kindred, and lower thy wing unto those believers who follow thee."

THE PROPHET at first had little impact outside his intimate circle. Converts were few, the earliest being Khadijah, two young wards, and Abu Bakr, a Quraysh merchant. But with growing confidence and a message that gave new values to life, Mohammed drew larger audiences. Arab paganism counted death the end of existence and made wealth a goal; the Koran taught that rich must share with poor, promised glorious afterlife for the righteous and hellfire for others.

In the pilgrimage season Mohammed went among the crowds at

the Kaaba, declaring idols unworthy of worship. Quraysh elders who held confessions to sell ritual robes, "sacred" food, and water, saw their profits shrink. The democratic spirit of Mohammed's preaching threatened the power of the upper classes. Thus town leaders turned in fury against the "driveller, star-gazer, and maniac-poet." They stoned and beat converts. Khadijah died, piling sorrow on adversity. In September 622 Mohammed, warned of a plot against his life, obeyed a vision telling him to leave Mecca for Yathrib, an oasis city 250 miles north. This momentous hegira, or migration, makes the start of the Moslem era, for with it Islam grew to political power. And Yathrib became Madinat-al-Nabi, "the city of the Prophet," or more simply, Medina.

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SILENCE. *One of the practices that attract people to the church is the way we use periods of silence --- especially before an act of corporate worship. Silence provides an opportunity for each person to prepare himself for the action that is to follow; silence allows each person to express his own deep feelings to God in a way that is individual yet is a part of the total offering of the body assembled; silence helps create an atmosphere of reverence and awe as we meditate upon what our Lord has done or is about to do for each of us; silence helps to bridge the gap that may exist between our hurry-up-ness and the Biblical injunction, "Be still and know that I am God." There is a time and place for everything, including acts of silence in our corporate worship.* (From THE ANGLICAN DIGEST)

WALKING WITH GOD

BY ALBERT E. NEIGHBOURS

I walk this day
and wait until tomorrow
to walk that day,
and the day
that will follow;
knowing
that God walks with me
and all of my days
are in His hands.

THE UNIVERSE WHISPERS

BY JOY BERGMAN

I am bathed in love
I do not hide behind bushes
or the walls of my soul

I am open to the world
and the heart of man

I am kindred
to the suns of you

I will fly to the South
and the North wind will hear me
flapping my wings fast
following the night

I have heard that the stars
talk each to each
and the universe whispers
beyond and forth
Can you hear me?

THE NIGHT was dark. Pain and sorrow drove sleep away. I prayed for morning. Why did I pray for morning? Because morning brings light, and the light of day is a symbol of the Light which always brings joy. So day dawned and darkness folded its tents and the day brought new hope. Now hope stimulates faith. Faith sees a brighter scene ahead. Faith makes me accept God's promises. My night is turned into day, my sorrow into joy.

There never was a night that did not yield to day. The darker the night, the more brightly shine the stars. After the storm, the calm. After rain, the rainbow. After months of winter snow, the earth is clothed in freshness of blossom and growing crops. After destruction, there is repair, rebuilding. After sorrow, joy.

Sorrow carves out places in my heart, digs deep, cuts through the self-centeredness. And joy like the great swelling ocean flows in and fills these caverns full to overflowing. This joy smoothes out all the rough spots even as water smoothes the edges of rock. This joy gives life and energy and strength. This joy is so refreshing and radiant that I forget the pain and sorrow. And gradually I realize that now I have more real joy than I ever had before because God has enlarged my heart through sorrow. He has stretched wide its confining walls and deepened its desires. And now He fills me with Himself. For He is my joy.

Now my joy is full. As springtime floods the world with life and growth, as the earth cannot resist this new surge of life, so now my heart overflows with joy. I am more alive, more enthusiastic about life, more alert to the flowers at my feet and the bird notes in the air. I am more sensitive to God's voice within. His joy within me makes me feel light and airy and free --- unburdened, unchained by earth. I begin to feel my wings and soar off into the blue sky of eternal love, unhampered. I begin to taste the rarer atmosphere of Spirit. I begin to feel at home there.

And then when I return to life's routine, I find all things have a new lustre. All life has become more meaningful and more glorious. All the without is changed because the within is glorified. Sorrow has fled, but sorrow prepared my heart for this fullness of joy. God was in the sorrow and God is in the joy.

Your Sorrow Is Turned To Joy

BY MILDRED LONG

Tom Dunham

Tom Dunham

Rainy Day Thoughts

I SIT ON THE TOP OF MY DESK, Turk fashion, one leg tucked beneath me and the other bent at the knee, foot resting on the windowsill beside the ceramic figure of a black swan. The wings of the swan are tuned to the upbeat; he stretches them, forever trying to rise in flight from the marsh grass of the pedestal. Would I could grant him the power.

Everything seems to be straining against gravity today, surging and pulling upward. Tree branches rake the clouds in an almost determined effort to be free. I can almost hear them, caught in the fist of earth, shouting with the wind, "I am here --- not because I willed it, but because it is so. Let me go! Let me go!" Rain is the only downward force in this whole blustery day.

Out of the past my mother's voice reprimands me, reminding me that I sit in a most unladylike fashion. I am inclined to agree. What makes my position even worse is that half a century, a marriage, two children, and two grandchildren stretch between that distant voice and the present moment. This is of little importance to me today.

Today I am five years of age, no matter what the full tributaries of life raised on the backs of my hands would tell me. I am five, going on eternity. I may sit crosslegged atop the desk if I wish.

Nose close to the pane, I watch with great interest the coursing drops of water. They splash against the window as single drops, slant diagonally, and meet with others to form small streams. Near the lower corner of the glass, they merge with other streams, forming a wide band of water. Now there is more power, greater speed from the merging, until finally they run across the sill, drop from the farthest edge, and travel down the aluminum siding of the house into the earth. I can no longer see them. They are gone, but I know such is not the case.

Dr Arthur Beiser tells us in *The Earth:* 'The atmosphere sucks up about one hundred thousand cubic miles of moisture a year. Most of it falls back into the oceans, but thirty-five thousand cubic miles of it reaches the land as rain, snow, sleet, hail, and dew. A great deal of this goes underground and a great deal more evaporates again before flowing very far. An estimated ten million billion gallons runs off to replenish the seas." There is a constant cycle from earth to sky to

earth, ad infinitum.

I bend closer, watching this merging and final rushing with rapt attention. It takes such a small amount of time for the drops to land on the glass, meet with others, and dash from sight. Their course is run so swiftly. Like life, I conclude, adjusting the foot on the windowsill, easing the crick in my kneejoint.

From a place we cannot quite recall, a dark, sheltering place obscured by a darkling veil, we are suddenly dropped into a harsh, cold, and unyielding world. Salvador Dali declares, with certainty, that he remembers the last two months of his nine-months' confinement in the womb. "It was warm," he says. "It was soft. It was silent. It was Paradise." In this time, he insists, his genius began to flower.

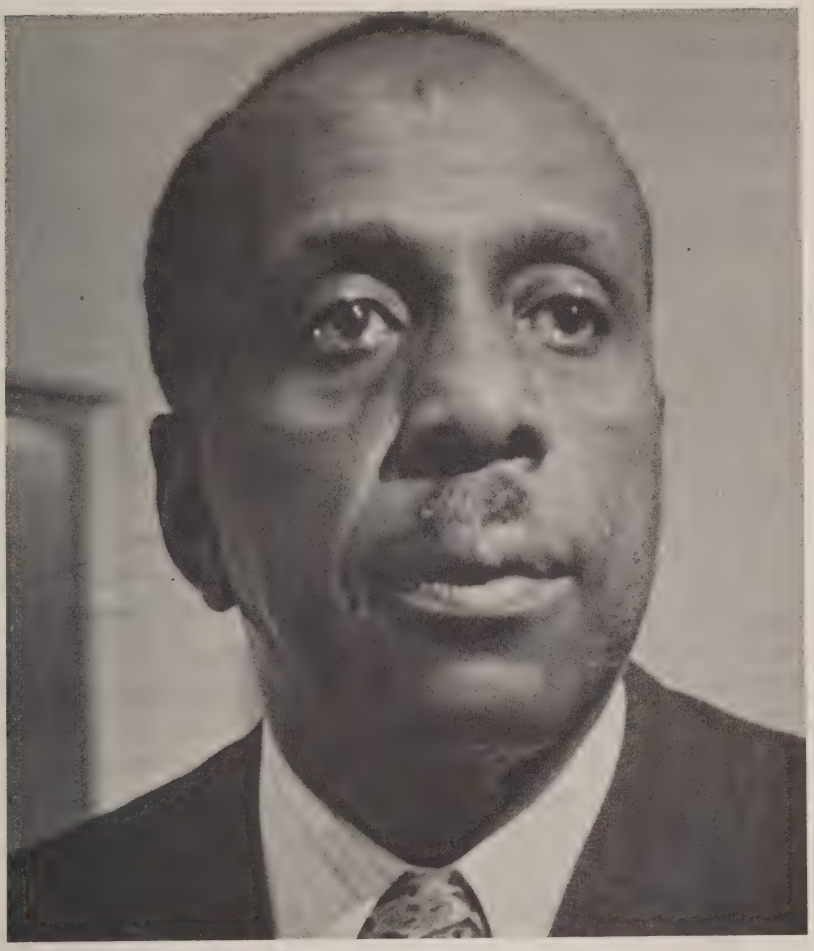
I claim no distinction for memory. My earliest recollections begin around the age of one-and-a-half or two; even then, I remember only random flashbacks. There was the time I lay in a small white iron crib, watching fearfully the flickering flame of an oil lamp --- the time I stood in that same crib shaking the sides, beginning to be lifted to freedom. I remember strong arms holding me while I watched from a second-story window a fire on our street. Except for these momentary pictures, my infant life is shrouded in mist.

I was a single droplet, at first, coming from behind a cloudy curtain. I moved slowly upon the earth. Hesitantly I met other drops and we trickled on together. Time found us moving faster and faster, an ever-widening stream, to become a river, like the broad river of water streaming down the windowpane. At any moment we might all plunge from the sill we call life and be lost in the earth. It seemed the course of my little drop was destined to become just another run.

I lean still closer, the coolness of the wet glass breathing into my face, and I study each separate drop. They all appear so pure, so transparent, yet I know they contain elements of life I cannot see without the aid of a microscope. In our polluted age, they are far from pure.

Like these individual drops, all lives contain much that does not appear to the casual glance. Look deeply. The core of every human being contains a nucleus of living water, invisible, it is true, a spirit thing that will not end when the course on earth is run. It will go on eternally, merging with an ocean whose boundaries are beyond knowledge, whose depths are beyond measure.

Howard Thurman



Religious News Service

BY NIXEON CIVILLE HANDY

HE ALWAYS KNEW THE HOLY. As a very small child growing up in Daytona Beach, Florida. it was given to him to know. His mother knew. He tells the story of seeing Halley's Comet with her. Its flashing tail frightened him. What will happen to us? Nothing will happen to us, Howard, thinking, no doubt, nothing we can't manage somehow with God's help.

When he was in school, he loved to play marbles, and was good

at it. But his mother forbade him to play for keeps. One day when his bag was empty, however, he remembered a boy with beautiful marbles who was not a very good player. Howard asked him to play, and when the game was over, had all the beautiful marbles in his own bag. After that, every time his mother spoke to him, he jumped with a guilty conscience. He says, life grew dingy at the sleeve. His relationship with his mother suffered, interrupted by the knowledge that he had disobeyed her trust in him. He finally broke down and told her. She hadn't known.

The family didn't own a trunk so they borrowed an old one from a neighbor. It had to be roped because its strap was broken. When he got to the station he bought a ticket with nearly all of his money, and the clerk told him the baggage could not go with the trunk tied up like that and it would cost more. . . . So the big dream was gone. He did not have that money. How could he go back home after he had told everyone goodbye? Crushed, he sat down on a step and cried.

Presently he became conscious of a big pair of shoes standing in front of him and a voice, "Boy, what the hell you crying about?" The shoes belonged to another black face, a red bandana, and denim cap and jumper. That man took him and the trunk back in to the station, and paid for the trunk. And Howard Thurman made a double vow. When he was earning, first he would take care of his mother, tell her to come home and live and not wash and iron anymore, and then he would help students, like he had been helped. And he was off to school in Jacksonville.

When he stood up to recite, the class laughed at his grammar, so the teacher took him home in the afternoons and gave him special help, reading the classics to him, feeding his hungry mind, preparing him for college.

Today, Dr Howard Thurman is one of the great preachers of the world, a writer of many books, university professor emeritus, retired dean of the chapel at Boston University, founder of the Church for the Fellowship of All People, in San Francisco, and spiritual mentor for thousands of persons all over the world. He has kept his vow to his mother, and today there is a Howard Thurman Trust Fund which assists black college students.

Thurman's theology of the holy transcends any denomination, any established religion. Hindu, Mohammedan --- they all understand him, and he understands them. He says the communication comes from knowing yourself within: the understanding heart opens to another, swinging

the doors open, back and forth. He is as profound as anyone living. His simplicity is devastating, however. Hear his hamburger story.

A mother went into a lunchroom with her daughter and small son. When the waitress came, the mother ordered, then the sister. The waitress looked at the boy. "My mother will order for him," said his sister. "Yes," said the mother, "I will order for him." But still the waitress looked at the boy, this time with a smile. "A hamburger?" she said. "With catsup and pickles and mustard? The Works?" He nodded. "The Works!" he said. The boy swelled two inches taller when the waitress called out his order for a hamburger and The Works. He pulled at his mother and said, "She thinks I'm real!"

Yes, a funny story. We laugh. But we cry, too. We don't treat each other as if we thought everyone was real. Thurman is telling us God is real,too, and he thinks we are. Holy. Holy.

Dr Thurman says, "Man's great ever-riding responsibility is to worship God."

God is the creator of all life, and each and everyone of us is related to one another and all that is living, tree, flower, land, and sea. . . He is the creator of every relationship.

Thurman tells of visiting a young friend. They look out the window to see the little sister playing in the sandbox. As they look, a rattlesnake crawls in and the two are playing together. The brother goes out one door to one side of the housese and Thurman to the other, lest someone should come unexpectedly and disturb the holy innocence, and startle fear into either the child or the snake. Thurman says, "We were stationed to prevent fear from coming into that sandbox."

Many have asked Dr Thurman about violence. Being a black man, they feel, he should have opinions, perhaps a solution. One of the stories he tells about violence is personal. After school he did garden work for white people. In this instance, there was a daughter who came out of the house to harass him while he worked. She would throw leaves around after he had raked them. Finally he told her he would have to tell her father that he couldn't finish the job because of her. And the child, angry, took a pin and jabbed it hard into his arm. When he drew back in pain, she said, "That can't hurt you, you can't feel!"

When he and Mrs Thurman visited India in 1935, they had a private audience with Gandhi that lasted three hours. They spoke of violence as a common way of life, quick, limited, dramatic, efficiently

short-lived. They agreed this way does not answer any question nor offer any sure decision. Violence remains on the edge of possibility. Violence says out loud: "We have lost our belief in the validity of love as the workable way."

If loving becomes our center, where God is, and we can center down into this living reality, then we function most effectively. The base becomes our base of ultimate decision, informing the quality of our behaviour. Thurman: "You have to be at home somewhere, before you can be at home anywhere."

Believe, he is at home with the center of his being, in complete, constant encounter with his creator.

He asks three qestions of himself and others.

1. What is your real name?

Not what is your given name, but what is the name you yourself give to your inner self, when you call on that inner self? When you are not pretending? What is within you, literal and irreducible? (We tend to become increasingly anonymous in a crowd. And we seek out crowds so we don't have to name ourselves out loud.)

2. What do you want?

What do you really want? What is it you are trying to catch? To be? To become? Where are you going? What will you work hardest for? What are the desires you want most to fulfill? With the most searching insistence?

3. How will you go about getting this?

Will you ever deny your own sense of values to gain this thing? What is your proposition to life? Will there be overtones which are amoral? Will these become sufficiently overpowering so that you become hard and unresponsive to the inner sense of values which formerly held you in confidence. Paul says he fought a good fight. Can you? Will you commit a single act of debasement to achieve this great and glorious goal you have set for yourself? Will you walk over a friend, use

him or her to gain a post, a job, the finish-line? Or will you win success in a way that is wholly creative and redemptive for you?

True or false? Life asks every day.

Thurman says: "Do you seem real to yourself? Or is it only the echo of your voice you listen to? Are you only the tail of the kite, flying alone, knotted and twisted and tattered, or the business of the kite itself, ready to contact holy lightning?"

THE FIRST TIME we heard Dr Thurman speak was in 1932 in the new men's-dormitory in Claremont, California. He stood against a huge wall mural of Prometheus Unbound by Diego Rivera. This created an appropriate scene for the following story by an incomparable storyteller.

"The Story of Towser"

Towser sat with his tail in a puddle of water. No, it wasn't raining, except out of his eyes. An aristocratic-looking mastiff came along. Don't you have enough to eat? Yes, sometimes someone throws me a bone. Then what's the matter? I want someone to love. Love? What's that good for? Can you eat it? And he sniffed and went away.

Towser shook himself and hurried down the street to a house where a woman lay very ill. The little dog who lived there was away. So Towser went to the door and made a sound that meant, may I come in? In the long reaches of the night, when the pain was very great, he lay by the bedside and licked the woman's hand. When her dog came home, he went away.

Running down the block he saw a newsboy. What fun! The boy snapped his fingers at him. But when he came close, the boy lifted his foot and kicked him. . . and laughed.

Towser lay in the gutter, then got up and moved along. He saw a man jump out of a shop with a bundle of stolen meat under his arm, and followed him, barking. The man scooped him up and hurled him against a tree trunk. He dropped to the ground and lay very very still.

"Thus," said Dr Thurman, "was Jesus crucified two thousand years ago."

Our kindnesses reach out like ripples of water,
like branches of a tree, each growing out of another. . . .

BRANCHES

BY NEIL C. FITZGERALD

MY SISTER-IN-LAW has three boys ---ages eleven, nine, and six --- and she has a wonderful way of planning creative activities for them during the holiday seasons.

For instance, at the beginning of Advent, the boys gather up the grass clippings they have been using for mulch in their vegetable garden. They put them into a basket in their living-room. Then, for each good deed they do, they place a straw into the manger setting. By Christmas they have a nice crib of straw for the Christ Child. On Christmas Eve the family has a small candlelight-procession to bring the figures of Mary and Joseph to the manger.

Last year after Christmas the boys discarded the straw from the crib outside their bedroom window. It was quickly forgotten. In the spring they discovered, to their surprise, robins had taken the straw and built a nest for their young in a nearby yew.

This incident made me think of how often the good we do travels far beyond our original intentions. Our kindnesses to others reach out like ripples of water, like branches of a tree, each one growing out of another.

I believe God extends the limits of our prayers in a similar manner. God does hear and respond to our petitions and intentions. He draws from our prayer life as a farmer draws from a reservoir to nourish many different crops. It becomes a source of strength for a better world.

The Holidays Jesus Observed

SAMUEL M. SILVER

Part Three / Pentecost and Tabernacles

IF YOU LIVE IN THE CITY, you like good weather. If you're a farmer, you have to have it to survive. The tiller of the soil worries a lot about the elements, especially during the period when his crops are gestating.

After spring planting, the farmer "gets religion"---that is, he ardently hopes that the sun and soil and the seeds and the moisture will all harmonize to produce good results.

The farmers of old were especially apprehensive during the interlude between spring planting and the emergence of the first sprouts and buds. This period of trepidation became a time for special supplications to the gods of yore and, when monotheism became the Jewish vogue, to the one God.

It is often mentioned in Holy Writ that this interval is seven weeks. Seven was a number which intrigued our forebearers; the seventh day is a holy one. Like twelve, seven was a combination of two other favorite numbers, four and three. So we are not surprised to read that a special observance was ordained "seven weeks after Passover."

In the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, we read that Moses instructed his people after settling down in the Promised Land they were to take a portion of their first fruits to the temple and there donate it to the priests in thanksgiving for divine blessings and favors. This is the origin of the Festival of First Fruits, about which Jesus read much in the Bible (Exodus 34, Numbers 28, etc.).

In the earliest historical strata, the donation of first fruits is a way of propitiating the gods as well as of thanking them. Those who molded Judaism took this practice and embodied it in a religious holiday in glorification of God. The principle is understandable. God gave man the wherewithal---the skill to plant and plough---to bring food from the earth. So it

was no more than proper that man should give back to God a part of that which he had received from Him.

The holiday which eventuated also came to be known as the Festival of Weeks, or the holiday of the summer harvest. Later it acquired the logical name of Pentecost---from the Greek for "fifty."

The occasion was one of rejoicing and jubilation tempered by solemn recitation of Psalms and special prayers.

Just as an historical overlay was added to Passover, so an historical episode of great importance was assigned to Pentecost. The people were told that the first fruit of the Exodus was the bestowal of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Weeks---or, to use the Hebrew, Shavuot---then became the birthday of the Decalogue. As such, it merited even greater attention, and Jesus in his synagogue heard it referred to as "the time of the giving of the moral law."

The holiday lasted but one day. But, like Christmas or the Fourth of July, it was long anticipated and its afterglow remained long after it was over.

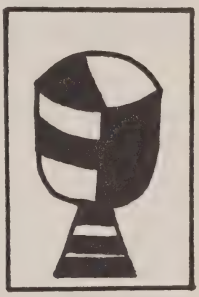
The wait for Pentecost was so emotion-laden that the entire period between Passover and its successor-holiday became a counting--time. Like Lent, which is patterned after the Passover-Pentcecost syndrome, the Festival of Weeks was anticipated by the faithful, who would daily declare "this was such-and-such day" of the counting-time. The interval was sometimes referred to as the period of Omer, which is Hebrew for "barley." The offering of first fruits invariably included the Omer.

In Temple times, Weeks was once again an occasion for pilgrimages to the holy site and huge worship convocations in the sanctuary. The Psalms were sung, the instruments and priestly voices resonated with the words and lyrics ascribed to King David, and high spirits were in evidence especially if the crops were good.

An interesting Biblical book was attached to Pentecost. The Book of Ruth, one of the documents from that section of Scripture known as *Hagiographa* --"literary works" (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, etc.).

Why Ruth? Because that highly esteemed lady joined Judaism voluntarily. She was a non-Jew. She married a Jew, who died. Her mother-

in-law Naomi, constrained to return to Judea, then urged Ruth to stay with her own people (as her sister Orphah did). But Ruth, in a celebrated passage, asked instead to become associated with the Jewish faith. Later, as we know, she married Boaz and was the progenitress of no less a personage than King David himself.



What is the connection between Ruth and Pentecost? Well, when the Israelites stood at Mt. Sinai, they took were like heathens. They were offered a new faith, Judaism. Would they accept it ---and all that it entailed? In Exodus we learn the answer. The people unhesitatingly said, "We will hear it and we will obey it." Ruth is the personification of voluntary adherence to the faith.

How did Jesus celebrate Pentecost? By attending services in the sanctuary. He joined in the recitation of prayers at the synagogue, while at home the family once again blessed the wine and the bread. The festive menu consisted of dairy products, which were regarded as tasty and delicious to symbolize "the sweetness of the Torah." And the Book of Ruth was read and reread.

In later times, Weeks has become the occasion for the confirmation of young people who have completed the first stage of their religious education. The term "confirmation" has been taken by modern Jews from Protestant and Catholic communions.

In the New Testament, we read about something momentous which occurred on Pentecost. The second chapter of Acts tells us that the Disciples, after the death of Jesus, gathered to celebrate the holiday. Then, just as God's spirit had descended on the Israelites at the first Pentecost, so His spirit is said to have enveloped the twelve.

Tabernacles

IN A TROPICAL COUNTRY like Israel, you have two harvest times: one in the spring and one in autumn.

Just as the spring harvest prompted celebration so did the one in

autumn. It was, even in tropical climes, the occasion for somewhat cooler and rainier weather. The autumn holiday came to be known as Sukkot, the plural of the Hebrew word *sukkah*, which means "a bower." It was called so from the habit of ancient farmers resting from their labors in little lean-to's and partaking there of refreshments.

Upon this simple nature-festival the fashioners of the faith Jesus adhered to fastened an historical overhang. They told the people that the improvised sheds which gave them shelter were remainders of the fact that their ancestors had lived in sukkot---temporary abodes, or tents. Even those who no longer lived in rural areas were urged to build little huts. They said this would help them empathize with the farmers as well as with those who in olden days lived in frail tents while traveling from bondage to the Land of Promise. Hopefully this empathy would extend as far as the plight of everyone in the world who was homeless, poor, and disadvantaged.

Sukkot---which came to be known as Tabernacles---in our day is ordained to last a week, like Passover. The first day and the seventh day of the week were deemed especially sacred, calling for sacrifices in the temple and for "solemn assemblies" -- that is, worship services. Intermediate days were a time to ponder God's providence toward the people during their long sojourn in the desert. The emphasis on divine providence gradually escalated so that the holiday became one of joy and gratitude. It is humanity's first Thanksgiving -- and, years later, it was grafted onto American soil by the Pilgrims.

In the time of Jesus the holiday of Sukkot was a period of great rejoicing. Again, pilgrimages were made to the sacred shrine in Jerusalem, and during the intermediate days there was parading in the streets, accompanied by music on flutes and other instruments. The temple area was dazzlingly illuminated. A highlight of the proceedings was the pouring out of water from golden ewers. The libation originated in a propitiatory act urging heaven to favor mankind with enough water to make the land fertile.

Sukkot is mentioned in the Bible as a time of joy. The streets of Jerusalem resounded with song, and a carnival atmosphere prevailed that was like the Mardi Gras of our day. It became the favorite festival of Jesus and his contemporaries.

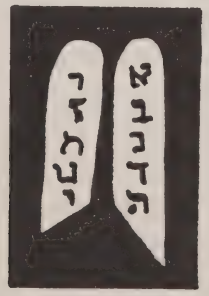
Outside of each home was the booth, or Sukkah, in which the family spent some time and actually took some meals. It had to be open at top so that God's heaven could be seen from it. In the Sukkah each day the family said blessings. One was said with a palm leaf in one hand and a citron in the other. The palm was supposed to be typical of the Lord's handiwork, the fragrance of the citron was a reminder of lovely aromas that came from the products of nature. The blessing enabled the worshipper to give thanks to the Lord for "sanctifying us with His ordinances, and commanding us to lift up the palm."

Another blessing reiterated the appreication of the celebrant for the extra holiness which divine precepts make available to the devout.

At worship reading from the Pentateuch included portions of Leviticus 23, Exodus 23, and Numbers, chapter 29. An additional book associated with the observance of Tabernacles is Ecclesiastes. What's the connection between Sukkot and Ecclesiastes? The Hebrew sages averred that the bond centers about the fragility of the sukkah, which is comparable to the Gentle Cynic's description of life as a weak phenomenon subject to the caprices of fate.

In the Book of John, chapter 7 begins with an account of the way Jesus celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. During the rites Jesus went to the temple and delivered a discourse. On the final day of the holiday, described in John as "that great day," Jesus quoted Isaiah (55: 1), who had written: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" -- a reference to the water display which highlighted the observance of history's first Thanksgiving Day.

The fourth part of this article will appear in the next issue



THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC by Andrew M. Greeley (Basic Books, New York, 280 pages, $15). This is an angry book, and rightfully so, for the author demolishes a number of perjorative myths that surround the American Catholic. The stereotype is supposed to be a reactionary, blue-collar lunch-pail worker who has never been quite integrated into the American community. Nor is the average American Catholic thought to be academically inclined or motivated to do well in business or the professions. Andrew Greeley has the facts and he makes sure we have them also. He is a Roman Catholic priest and well-known sociologist who is director of the Center For the Study of American Pluralism at the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago. He is a prolific and often provocative writer who combines fine style with knowledge and committment. This is an excellent resource book. Though primarily concerned with the American Catholic, it offers good insights into American society per se. --P.F.

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH, An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, by Karl Rahner (Seabury Press, New York, 470 pages, $19.50). Karl Rahner is one of the best-known Christian theologians of our times, and his book is a summary of the Christian faith as he has come to believe it. The tenor of this study is set forth in the introduction when the author states he is trying to reach readers who "are not afraid of wrestling with an idea" -- the idea of Christianity. Dr Rahner puts the historical conception of Christianity into the situation of our times. This does not imply that he is trendy. Emphatically he is not. But what he wants to do is express the whole of Christianity, not from a theoretical ivory-tower approach, but as it is believed and acted upon today. Though the book is meant to be read consecutively, I found this unnecessary. I read the section on Jesus, and it seemed to be able to stand by itself. This is a superb book. I recommend it unstintingly.--P.F.

CHRIST AND THE MEDIA by Malcolm Muggeridge (Eerdmans, 127 pages, $5.95). One of the most startling conversions on record is that of Malcolm Muggeridge, onetime editor of *Punch,* who spent decades as a TV performer and then turned against TV with vehemence. In this fascinat-

ing book he says he won't even have a TV set in his home. Why? Because the camera, in his view, is not a reporter but a distorter.Reality to him is the life and passion of Jesus, and all else is fantasy. He clobbers pornography, abortion, and liberal Christianity, as well as the media. Ironically, a fan of the author -- Billy Graham, writes a foreword in which praise is mixed with a demurrer. Graham contends that the teachings of Jesus can be brought to the multitudes through the airwaves which Muggeridge scorns. --S.M.S.

IN A VALLEY OF THIS RESTLESS MIND by Malcolm Muggeridge (Colins, New York, 175 pages, $8.95). What surprises me is that Muggeridge has been on the track of God for such a long time. Somehow I thought the iconoclastic former editor had come to faith late in life. This book is a kind of sleeper. Like other books by the author, it is thoroughly readable. But, beyond the amusing anecdotes and style, lies Muggeridge's dead-serious search for God. This search crossed the lives of others on quests of their own, and we get trenchant word-pictures of a large slice of humanity, many of them disturbing reflections of a side of ourselves. An interesting book which could be used for meditations of one's own. ---P.F.

THE 20TH CENTURY PULPIT. OUTSTANDING SERMONS BY 37 PULPIT MASTERS, edited by James W. Cox (Abingdon Press, paperback). Preaching has been described as an effort by a person on a high roof to get the contents of an eye-dropper into the eye of a passerby on the street below. A formidable task indeed. Yet many a pulpiteer has accomplished it.

The editor of this volume, who teaches homiletics at Southern Baptist College in Louisville, has used excellent judgment in his choice of its contents. He might have limited himself to fundamentalist Protestants, but the galaxy of preachers includes some liberal Protestants and Catholics as well. The "stars" are represented: Karl Barth, Gerald Kennedy, George Buttrick, Ernest Campbell, Billy Graham, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Norman Vincent Peale, Fulton Sheen, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Some of the pulpiteers are from Europe. One, a German named Thielicke, keeps you guessing about "what is coming" and points out that Jesus did the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. --S.M.S.

PRAYER *(Continued from page 5)*

we rebel and lash out frantically as if he were trying to strangle us. Still, if we were heroic enough to start by praying for an hour at the beginning of a hectic day, we might be so strengthened and so well nourished that we'd no longer fear anything, but rather meet every danger, every sacrifice, and every suffering head-on, and, amazed at having finished so early, find yet more time to pray at night.

Even those of us who hunger for God, those who want to pray, literally starve to death near the banquet table because we lack the courage to sit down and eat. Just as the harried housewife can't stop running to and fro, waiting on everyone, urging them to eat and lunging for dishes and spoons till she herself becomes so keyed-up that she's no longer hungry and can't swallow, so the best among us discourse on the need and efficacy of prayer and invite others to try it but are ultimately too tense and exhausted to do so ourselves.

God wants quiet; he works in silence; he needs serenity to act, and time to calm us down. Like present-day servants, he insists on one point: that we treat him with consideration, that we take time and trouble to think of him. God acts and works only with time. In prayer, he's not the one who must change (otherwise, prayer would surely be instantaneous); we're the ones who must gradually be changed --- we and our slowness, our hesitation, our attachment to the very evil we hope to be delivered from, and our dread of the grace we think we're imploring. We come before him wholly taken up with ourselves, obstinate in our desires, and half-crazed with the complaints of our flesh and the clamor of our appetites. As a Trappist friend of mine once said, "There's no use slamming on the brakes and stopping our car on a dime if the motor inside keeps whirling at top speed." We can plop our body on a chair, but our anxious, indocile, ravening mind continues to fret and agitate itself futilely within us. It takes time --- a long time --- for the engine to decelerate and for us to move in rhythm with God; to adjust our tempo to his tempo, our will to his will, and our steps to his steps; to enter into a state of relaxation and recipience; and to subdue our interior pulsations so that we may begin to share in his peace. Modern physics attributes the resistance of bodies to the rapidity of molecular vibrations. From our own experience, we know that a nervous stomach can't assimilate food, and, on another level, that trepidations blocks recep-

tivity. We often complain that we don't know God because he's silent, remote, absent; but God doesn't fail us: it's we who fail him.

Of all beings in heaven and on earth, God is the most alive and active. "My Father goes on working," said Jesus, "and so do I." That Trappist friend once told me, "I'm like a drinking glass that's too small for the amount of water poured into it. The moment I kneel, the moment I recollect myself, everything spills over." God is pre-eminently like that: himself a fountain of living water, he has promised that those who drink that water will have "a spring inside them welling up to eternal life." Ours is the religion, not of God's absence, but of his presence --- of his real presence despite his invisibility.

God may be invisible to our eyes, but he becomes visible to the soul that prays. There's nothing more present, more manifest or more operative than God once we open our soul to him. If we want to let him in, be filled with him, and start kindling at the touch of his flame, we must be willing to pray for three hours at a stretch. All we have to do is sacrifice to him the time we gladly so devote to a play, a movie or a baseball game.

One day the apostles followed Jesus to a solitary spot --- a craggy silent mountaintop, far from the crowds where they usually acted important and officious, like influential mediators. There, in that peaceful atmosphere, they gradually composed themselves, started seeing things in perspective and became attentive to Jesus; until, focusing on him alone and open to his influence, they unsealed their eyes and beheld him for a moment as he really was all the time.

GRADES. *Last January, forty years after she dropped out of school to go into show business, Pearl Bailey entered Georgetown University to earn a degree, majoring in French. Now the singer has received her first report-card, and said it was "better than getting good reviews for a performance." The fifty-nine-year-old freshman earned four B's and an A, the latter for a course in religion. That was particularly pleasing, Miss Bailey said, for "as long as you have A's with God, honey, that's all that matters."* (*Albin* Krebs in The New York Times).

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Freda Karsin Routh

Tiny fig tree
Bruised by careless
boot,
Responded to
My patient love
And gave me back
sweet fruit.